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***Canada's Forests: A History of Use and Conversation.* By Ken Drushka. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003. viii + 120 p., illus., tables, maps, index. ISBN 0-7735-2661-7 \$12.95 pb.; ISBN 0-7735-2660-9 \$42.95 hb.)**

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In *Canada's Forests*, Ken Drushka has provided a lucid and competent primer for non-specialists and the general public. In very broad strokes he has managed to unravel the human and natural phenomenon that have shaped the character of the diverse forests of the nation, with an emphasis on industrial use and the evolution of intellectual currents and public policy regarding the best ways to manage the forest. This is a useful book for people interested in knowing more about Canada's rich forest heritage. With a few exceptions, he does an admirable job in explaining complex concepts (such as sustained yield) that pervade the general discourse on forest-related issues but are often poorly understood by the general public.

In a book of this length there are invariably omissions. One of the weaker aspects of the *Canada's Forests* is that the international context of the development of the forest industries of the nation receives less attention than it deserves. This is particularly true of the nineteenth century, when British trade policy concerning the forests of British North America played a central role in determining the pace and character of settlement and the development of the forest industries in the colonies. The preferential timber tariffs starting in the 1810s and the implications of their removal starting in the 1840s are not mentioned. At least as much as any other factor, the tariffs, which allowed New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Quebec to compete favourably in the British square timber market, sustained the large waves of immigration to the region in the first half of the century. "New Brunswick was forest born" as suggested the historian Arthur R. M. Lower. The same could be said for large parts of Nova Scotia and Quebec. Likewise, the Reciprocity Treaty with the United States (1854), which resulted in the advent of the golden age of sawmilling in the east, is not mentioned. One of the only glaring factual errors in the book is, perhaps, a result of these omissions. His statement that the Miramichi Fire (1825) "was not looked upon as much of a calamity," as "the forest itself was considered to be of little value" (p.

26), would have been news to the communities along the river as they were as dependent on the forest for survival as any communities—anywhere, at anytime—in the history of Canada. Lastly, the great debate over the export of raw pulpwood to the United States that culminated in the years after the First World War is worthy of a mention. It was the most significant factor in the largest North American industrial migration in the first half of the twentieth century, the movement of the newsprint industry from the northern states to the eastern provinces.

Written as part of the Forest History Societies Issues Series one of the objectives of *Canada's Forests* is to present a "balanced rendition of often contentious issues" (p. ii). Overall, Drushka succeeds in this difficult task. One of the few areas where this breaks down is in his ready acceptance of the industry position that Crown land tenure needs to be reformed. He makes more than one statement to the effect that "industry was unwilling to invest in forests it did not own without guarantees that it would receive the benefits of those investments" (p. 67). The fact is that the vast majority of Crown land leases in Canada are continuous, some having been held by the same companies for more than a century. Without adopting the American position on the long-running softwood lumber dispute, it is possible to argue that the Crown land system has, in a variety of ways, been a subsidy to the forest industries. It is a highly debatable point as to whether or not privatizing the public forest would result in better management practices within the industry. Few informed people interested in bio-diversity and multi-use forests are willing to take that risk. There will always be a tension within the industry regarding best forest management practices and profit. Retaining a significant portion of the nation's forest as public trust is the best hedge that Canada has against unwise forest use on the part of industry, particularly at the present time when the ability of Canadian pulp and paper producers to compete in international markets is steadily declining.

These minor criticisms aside, *Canada's Forests* is a lively and thought provoking read. The author deserves credit for taking a truly massive topic and presenting a text that can be profitably read by policy-makers, university students and the general public. Moreover, it is timely, as the future of forest use in Canada is very likely to be a defining domestic and international political issue of the next generation.

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